

ting employers and the state (as well as husbands) to child care, new definitions of citizenship that would recognize the right of every adult to “both a good job and to time for caregiving” (165). She insists that women’s rights should be based not on their difference from men “but on the fact of the movement of labor out of

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**Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).**

In Susan K. Cahn’s imaginative exploration of modern Southern history, if 1960’s student sit-in movement represents the New South’s coming of age, the decades prior represent its adolescence. And what better way to study the adolescent South, she posits, than through the history of Southern adolescents, or more specifically its female adolescents? In order to understand the growing pains of the New South, as modernity battled with cultural traditions and legal structures, Cahn navigates the terrain of young womanhood, a stage on which played out dramas over not just sex, but race, class, and modernity itself.

Cahn argues that adolescent women were a flashpoint in the struggles of a developing New South since “the sexuality of teenage girls struck an important political nerve, one connected to a larger regional crisis of identity” (20). Cahn’s study runs from the “problem” white flappers of the 1920s up to the black teenage girls who desegregated white schools in the mid- to late 1950s. Cahn makes her argument decade by decade through a series of disparate case studies that explore both the lived experience of black and white adolescent girls and the social management of their sexuality. Chapters are devoted to eugenic sterilization programs, adolescent consumers, reform programs for sexual delinquents, dancing, World War II pickup girls, and the young women who were part of the first wave of black students to integrate formerly white schools. It is a wide-ranging landscape that Cahn covers well, marshalling an impressive array of evidence including diaries, court records, and oral histories. Her strongest work, such as that on the eugenics program, is that in which she can dig her teeth into a case study rather than trying to diagnose larger and more diffuse sociological patterns, like black female sexuality.

Cahn begins with the movement of rural black and white women into the urban workforce in the 1920s and 1930s, and the fear this engendered on the part of ruling men. While this phenomenon was not unique to the region—much has been written about the similar situation of mill girls of Lowell, Massachusetts—Cahn argues that the South was different because its “moral panic about adoles-

cent sexuality grew, in part, from an unstable foundation of interracial dependency and proximity” (27). Southern society functioned according to strict rules governing race, class, and appropriate gender roles and mill girls and other young rural transplants threatened this order by blurring the lines between child and woman, poor white and poor black and spirited youth and modern decadence. Cahn does note one important class distinction; where whites in the late 1920s were mostly concerned with policing white working girls, blacks focused on middle class girls, education, and uplift. Both races were concerned with sexual “delinquents” and Cahn devotes a chapter each to black and white girls reformatories. Whites seemed to police adolescent white sexuality out of a fear of “social disorder and racial degeneracy,” while the uplift and reform efforts launched by black clubwomen were meant to argue against natural racial inferiority, since a reformed girl was proof that degeneracy was not a fixed condition (49, 70).

Cahn admits that her later chapters on rock n’ rollers, pickup girls, and high school students focus on whites, though she argues that the specter of black female sexuality is always present and is frequently invoked, either as a contrast against white virtue or as a castigation against all too similar white sexual deviance. But the conversation shifted over time from a focus on class distinctions to racial interest. By the 1950s, teens of both races had “developed a more autonomous and widely shared culture,” in which boys and girls mixed freely, and racial mixing was a constant threat (308). With the social order thus challenged, white leaders—and who exactly they are could be better defined—struggled to restrain and constrain female adolescent immorality. As the New South grew through its own difficult adolescence, Cahn argues, the teenaged girl came to represent the instability of families, class distinctions, gender roles, and especially the systems of patriarchy and white supremacy. It is a provocative argument and Cahn adds greatly to our understanding of sexuality and adolescence during a pivotal period of Southern history.

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**Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).**

Concluding his superb study of the largest African-American local in the Industrial Workers of the World, Peter Cole underscores the main theme of the book: “Local 8 demonstrates what can be accomplished when workers overcome racial and ethnic differences...(even in the face of) the myriad, powerful forces that can defeat such efforts” (176). In order to probe the conundrum of how Local 8 sustained itself for over a decade (from 1913 to 1922) as a bulwark of IWW unionism in the face of powerful racial divisions and massive political